Schneider Automation GmbH
Steinheimer Str. 117

63500 Seligenstadt

Patent Claims

Automation Device and Method for Operating Said Device

1. Automation device (12, 14) such as a memory programmable
   controller, comprising a control unit (20), which, during a
   period of operating time for the automation device (12, 14),
   performs operations involving the transmitting and/or
   receiving of data from peripheral units (30), **characterized
   in that** the automation device (12, 14) is equipped with a
   module (32) for registering the operating time and/or the
   operations performed by the automation device (12, 14), and
   in that the module (32) is coupled to an evaluation unit
   (38, 46) for calculating a user fee accrued by the user for
   use of the automation device (12, 14).

2. Automation device in accordance with Claim 1, **characterized
   in that** the module (32) is connected to the evaluation unit
   (38), which located at a central point (18), via a data
   transmission medium (16) such as a telecommunications
   connection, preferably the Internet/Intranet.

3. Automation device in accordance with Claim 1 or 2, **characterized in that** the evaluating unit (46) is integrated with the module (32) into a component (34), in that the component (34) is equipped with a memory unit (44) used to store an amount of operating credit and/or a reading unit (40) for a payment card (42), and in that the amount of operating credit is automatically deducted in correspondence with the amount of operating time and/or the operations performed by the automation device (14).

4. Automation device in accordance with at least one of the preceding claims, **characterized in that** the evaluation unit (38, 46) is equipped with a calculating unit such as a calculation table, in which the operating times and/or operations are assigned corresponding debit amounts.

5. Automation device in accordance with at least one of the preceding claims, **characterized in that** the module (32) is equipped with a safety unit, which halts operation of the automation device (12, 14) as soon as the stored credit has been used up.

6. Automation device in accordance with at least one of the preceding claims, **characterized in that** operating credit can

be loaded into the memory unit (34) [sic] that is integrated in the component (34), online through the data transmission medium (16).

7. Automation device in accordance with at least one of the preceding claims, **characterized in that** the data transmission medium is designed as a telecommunications network such as the Internet or Intranet, or as a wireless telecommunications connection such as a radio pathway.

8. Method of operation for an automation device (12, 14), **characterized in that** the operating time and/or the operations performed by the automation device (12, 14) are registered and evaluated for calculation of a user fee, accrued by the user for use of the automation device.

9. Method in accordance with Claim 8, **characterized in that** the registered service data are transmitted via a data transmission medium (16) to a central point (18), or are evaluated on-site in the automation device, wherein the operating time and/or the operations performed are used to calculate user fees, preferably using a calculation table (38), wherein a predetermined amount of credit, stored in the automation device (12, 14) or in the central point (18),

or loaded using a payment card (42), is debited in keeping with the operating time and/or operations performed by the automation device (12, 14).